

Help! I Need a Therapist!

*A Guide for People with Intellectual and Developmental
Disabilities to Become Good Shoppers for Mental Health Services*



Sometimes people experience
strong feelings that need
support.

***Sometimes you may have different feelings.
You may feel:***

- Like you have to hide the way you really feel
- Sad
- Angry
- Unhappy
- Confused
- Too happy to be comfortable
- Scared
- Too tired to go through your day
- Frustrated
- Not included

You may want to reach out to someone for support when you feel this way.

A professional therapist can help you. A professional therapist is someone that you can talk to about your thoughts and feelings. They have been trained to help you understand feelings that make you upset. This toolkit can help you find a therapist.

Not all therapists know how to work with a person with a disability. Simply looking online or getting a referral may not help you find a therapist that can help you as a person with a disability. It is important to know how to find a good therapist.

These feelings can make your mind or body feel different. If these feelings make you feel different and make it hard for you to live your life, you might be interested in finding a therapist if you:

- Are not be able to sleep
- Want to sleep all the time
- Feel lots of aches in your body
- Have headaches
- Are not enjoying eating food
- Think cooking food is too hard
- Want to eat all the time
- Feel like it is hard to shower or get dressed
- Are not wanting to see anyone
- Want to talk about your problems to anyone who will listen
- Want to drink alcohol or use drugs your doctor did not give you



Find

To find a therapist that has experience working with people with disabilities, you might:

- *Ask a trusted person or friend to help you get started*
- *Contact a support group for ideas*
- *Ask people you know what therapist they see*
- *Ask your doctor if they know a therapist or a place that you can call*
- *Contact local networks that help people with disabilities and ask for ideas, such as:*
 - o *The Arc*
 - o *The Autism Society*
 - o *Your State Developmental Disabilities Council Offices*
 - o *Your local Center for Independent Living*
 - o *American Network of Community Options and Resources (ANCOR)*



When you call the therapist, here are some things you might want to say:

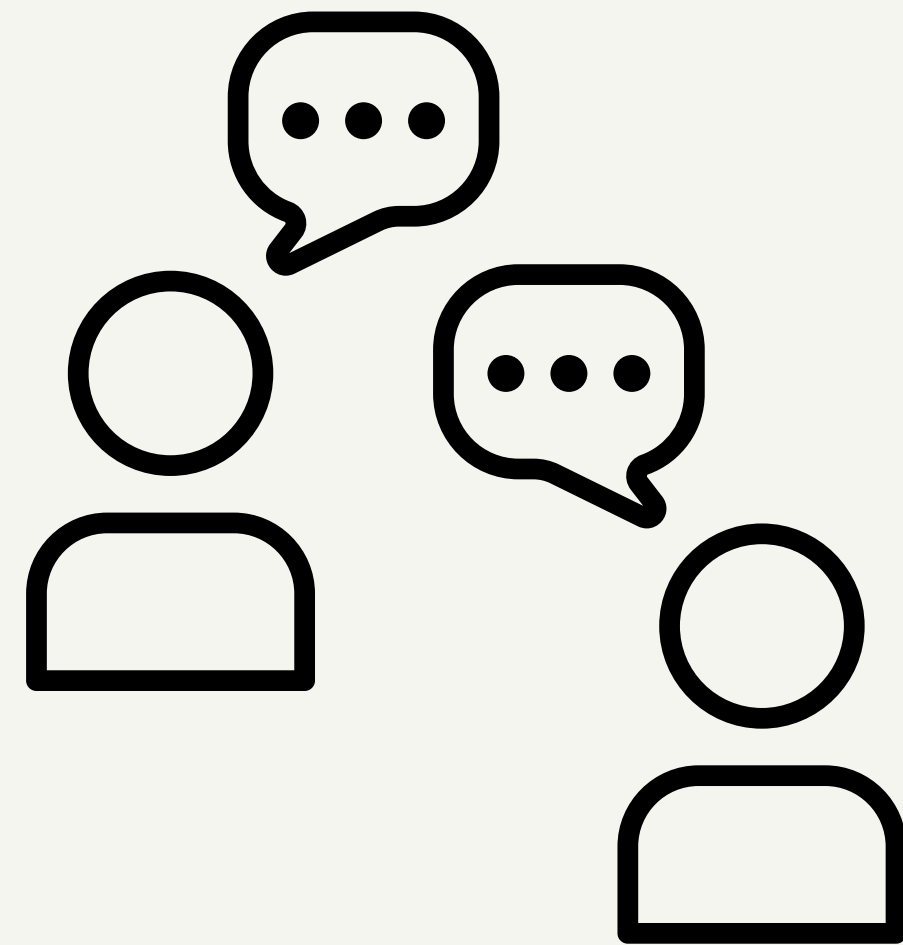
- My name is _____ and I have a disability.
- Does your office have someone who can help someone with an intellectual disability?
- I am looking for a therapist for emotional reasons and need help because I feel: mad, sad, anxious, scared
- I am looking for a therapist because I want to talk about what is going on in my life and get help thinking about it
- How many people like me have you helped?
- Have you worked with autistic women?
- Have you worked with autistic men?
- Have you worked with autistic trans and nonbinary people?
- Will you take my insurance? It is _____.
- Can I have a conversation with the therapist before I decide?
- Will you adjust your office to have: (insert here; like, low lighting or no noise from outside)?
- Will you be mad at me if it's hard for me to talk at first?
- Will you let me use a laptop or an iPad to talk if my words don't work?
- Understanding my culture and my ethnicity is important to me. I may want to ask questions about: _____



What Do I Do When I Meet a New Therapist?

Meeting a new therapist makes many people nervous at first. That's okay. But sometimes it helps to go in with some ideas and questions.

Before the meeting, you might want to make a list of things you are thinking or feeling. This list can help you remember what you want to say or help you feel less worried. You should also bring a list of the medications you are currently taking.



During the meeting, you should know:

Sometimes therapy meetings can bring up many feelings. You may think about things from the past, things happening now or even things you worry about in the future. These are not unusual feelings.

If you begin to get different feelings, including anger, it is okay. If you cry, it is okay. They know this happens, and they will help.

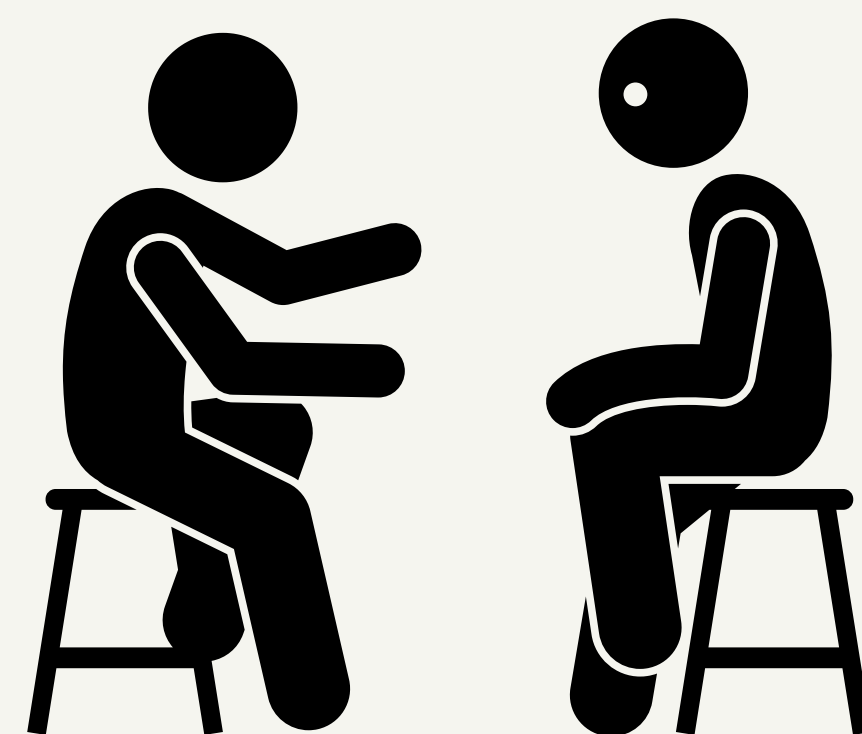
If you feel uncomfortable, you can leave at anytime

If you are feeling too many feelings, and you need a break or to schedule another time, that is okay too.

What if I have a therapist, and I do not like them?

You have the right to go to a therapist who:

- You feel comfortable with and like talking to
- Gives you the support you need and want
- Does not pressure you to take medicine or do things you do not want to do
- Supports your goals
- Listens to you
- Respects you



These are all reasons you should feel free to change therapists if you do not feel comfortable with the one you have.

To Find a New Therapist:

- Go back to page 1. Find a resource for a new therapist, screen them to see if they are a better fit.
- If you decide to leave, ask your therapist to send your records to your new therapist. You may need to sign a paper to do that. You can also choose not to send your old records. That's up to you.
- Remember that new situations can take a while to get used to—give time for that to happen.
- Your reason to stop seeing a therapist can be as simple as you just don't feel good there.

These feelings can be thoughts of suicide.

Sometimes our sadness can be so bad that we do not want to be here anymore. Everything seems too hard to do. We might not feel like we matter to anyone. Maybe you feel a very, very deep sadness, overwhelmed, confused, like no one cares about you—just that things are feeling too much. Maybe it's just too much to go on.

This is called being suicidal. And it is serious.

What if I feel really bad or sad and don't want to be here anymore?



What if I feel like I want to hurt myself or wish I were dead?

- Call someone you trust. Tell them you want to hurt yourself and that you need help.
- If you're in a group home, or other kind of setting outside your family home, find someone in charge and ask for help.
- Go to an emergency room and ask for help.
- Go to the fire department and ask them to get you to a hospital where you can get help.
- Call 911 and tell them you're having a mental health crisis and that you need an ambulance.
- Be specific; do not ask for police. Say you need an ambulance